

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Design Ratings

Background

On February 2nd, 2015, Project Coordinator Loren Brokaw sent the following assignment request to all members of the Leque Island Stakeholder Advisory Committee. A reminder email was sent to all Committee members on March 10th, 2015 and results were compiled on April 6th, 2015.

Excerpt from assignment request:

Given what we have discussed in our meetings regarding the pros, cons, and constraints of each design alternative, fill out the table using the following rating system to indicate your preferences on which design alternative WDFW should select. 1 = Fully Support; 2 = Support with reservations; 3 = Don't support, but don't oppose; 4 = Oppose

| <i>Design Alternative *</i> | <i>Rating</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>No Restoration</i> | |
| <i>Do Nothing</i> | |
| <i>Levee Breach</i> | |
| <i>Setback Dike</i> | |
| <i>Training Dike</i> | |
| <i>Full Restoration</i> | |

** I have re-attached a copy of the draft Alternatives Analysis document, to help remind you of the differences between the design alternatives.*

Summary of Results

19 responses were submitted from 30 Committee Members; 16 of which used the number rating scale requested in the assignment. 2 additional responses were submitted from Non-Committee Members. Results from Non-Committee Members were omitted from the averages.

Of the respondents, all of the 9 values identified for Leque Island were represented. This includes: duck hunting, pheasant hunting, wildlife viewing/photography, walking, fishing, dog training, kayaking, research, and groundwater.

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Stakeholder Advisory Committee members who completed the survey identified themselves as either members or representatives of the following groups and organizations: Pilchuck Audubon Society, Stillaguamish Watershed Council, Tulalip Tribes staff, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee, Juniper Beach Water District, Friends of Eide Road, Washington Waterfowl Association, Puget Sound Photo Forum, and Skagit Audubon Society. Additional groups were represented on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee; however, not all completed the assignment.

Below is a table that shows the average ratings among Stakeholder Advisory Committee respondents who used the number rating scale:

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 3.56 |
| Do Nothing | 3.38 |
| Levee Breach | 2.94 |
| Setback Dike | 2.38 |
| Training Dike | 2.25 |
| Full Restoration | 1.94 |

Key:

1 = Fully Support; 2 = Support with reservations; 3 = don't support, but don't oppose; 4 = Oppose

Individual Responses from Committee Members (unedited)

Response #1 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 1 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 4 |
| Setback Dike | 1 |
| Training Dike | 4 |
| Full Restoration | 4 |

I'm left with the reality that if the site is flooded there will be no photography to speak of, and all of the small birds and raptors will be trumped by salmon. So the Setback Dike looks like the only option that would preserve some land for the birds and those of us who go there for that reason.

No Restoration would be better, but you say your funding chance is dismal for this option.

I still think the fact that photographers and wildlife viewers must share the site with loaded shotguns is a dangerous situation. However the dike engineering is resolved, perhaps WFWD could consider a "shared use" that assigns different days of the week -- or different weeks of the month -- to the two groups that you must accommodate. I know of one reserve in California that was considering this as a solution to a similar problem.

In short, I like the place just as it is but would like it even better if there was no hunting when I'm out there.

Thanks for your patience and professional presentations.

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Response #2 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|---|
| No Restoration | 4 Too expensive, not really a good solution to the problem. |
| Do Nothing | 4 Still will have to deal with this later. Maintenance cost will very high. |
| Levee Breach | 1 This has some value, low cost, leaving some high ground for hunting. |
| Setback Dike | 2 This is another idea I liked. This would restore part of the area, but leave some fresh water wetlands. Maybe costly but maybe grant money would be possible. |
| Training Dike | 1 I gave this one a high mark for maintenance and usability. |
| Full Restoration | 1 This one may be costly at first but again grant money maybe used. Not no maintenance after work is completed. |

Finial Notes: What ever design used, replacement Pheasant Release area should be found within the same county that we are losing this one. Long term maintenance cost should be a factor is which design is used. Were would WDFW get the money for this? Nothing against WDFW, but look at the road at Big Ditch. Take out and put in areas for small boats should be considered. Park areas should be large. This area will be hunted very hard you will need parking. Thanks for allowing me to participate in this process, It was a very excellent experience. If another stake-holder meeting takes place for a new release site in the future, I would like to be part of that. WDFW and Ducks Unlimited did a great job.

Response #3 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

1. No Restoration – 4 (Oppose) – with funding highly unlikely and permit potential very expensive, this option is not a realistic option.
2. Do Nothing – 3 (Don't support, but don't oppose) – with funding highly likely and permit potential low cost, this option is worth consideration.
3. Levee Breach – 3 (Don't support, but don't oppose) – with funding highly likely and permit potential low cost, this option is worth consideration.
4. Setback Dike – 1 (Fully Support) – with funding likely and permit potential low cost, this is the only option that is a compromise to all stakeholders.
5. Training Dike – 2 (Support with reservations) – with funding highly likely and permit potential low cost, this option provides some benefits (e.g., bird and wildlife viewing opportunities) beyond salmon habitat restoration.
6. Full Restoration – 3 (Don't support, but don't oppose) – with funding highly likely and permit potential low cost, this option is worth consideration.

Let me first say that I think you have done a truly great job of leading this effort – you have been very clear at every step. Funding will be the main driver in the decision making process. For this reason, option 1 should be taken off the table. Option 4 (setback dike) is the only option that is a compromise to all stakeholders, and thus it is my preferred option. Option 5 (training dike) at least provides some benefits (e.g., bird and wildlife viewing opportunities) beyond salmon habitat restoration. The other remaining options appear to only provide for salmon habitat restoration. If there is anything more that I can do to assist you in the process moving, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks again for your great work!

Response #4 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative | Rating |
|--------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 3 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 3 |
| Setback Dike | 1 |
| Training Dike | 3 |
| Full Restoration | 2 |

Response #5 (Respondent attended 1 Committee meeting)

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Lecque Island Stakeholder process. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend most evening meetings due to a vision problem that prevents me from driving safely at night.

Although I was unable to attend many meetings, I did read the reports and other distributed materials. After considerable reflection I have concluded that the levy should be restored at its current or proximate location.

The alternatives discussed did nothing to indicate how the existing flora and fauna would be protected or replaced. There is currently a healthy wildlife community that occupies the site including several species of rodents, birds, coyotes, raccoons and others. The birds alone present a population unique in its richness and popularity. The site provides access to hunters as well as the growing numbers of birders. Short eared and long eared owls, eagles and assorted other raptors would be seriously diminished by the loss of habitat suggested by all of the other alternatives.

I understand that financing any of the alternatives is problematic (with the possible exception of "do nothing"). This is unfortunate, but may not be an insurmountable problem at the political level if, and when, appropriate interest group pressures are brought to bear. Unfortunately, it appears that the only voice being presented at the political level today is that of the "salmon habitat enhancement promoters" whose projects to date have not provided enough empirical evidence of their success to satisfy any but a few "true believers". The alternatives presented in this project, other than restoration, tend to suggest trading one very desirable and occupied habitat for a watery landscape that likely will take a very long time to populate with new species and serving a few hunters and fisherman at the expense of the more general public and the many beautiful and increasingly rare species currently occupying the site..

I have filled out your little chart below. The survey link seems to be inactive, but I will continue to try. I hope others will provide you with more detailed input and, once again, I thank you for the opportunity to participate.

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 3 |
| Levee Breach | 4 |
| Setback Dike | 3 |
| Training Dike | 4 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

Response #6 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|---|
| No Restoration | 4 Not feasible for funding reasons |
| Do Nothing | 3 Very feasible but does not benefit habitat as much or as quickly as desired |
| Levee Breach | 3 Feasible but not quite as much positive effect on habitat as desired |
| Setback Dike | 3 Funding and permitting seem dicey. Not as much habitat creation as desired. |
| Training Dike | 1 Has the highest habitat value but still offers some access to wildlife watchers. Funding & permitting seem to be no problem |
| Full Restoration | 2 Also has great habitat creation and good probability of funding & permitting. Wildlife watching would be severely impacted. |

Response #7 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 3 |
| Levee Breach | 3 |
| Setback Dike | 3 |
| Training Dike | 4 |
| Full Restoration | 2 |

I think the levee along the east end of the site needs to be removed for sure to restore hydrological and sediment management process. I do think that leaving about 200' of the west dike connecting to the new WSDOT parking lot would be a good idea and compromise for the other uses not addressed by full restoration. It would be fairly inexpensive to groom for ADA and birders and ADA hunters would have the ability to get away from the road. When I asked about that at the last workshop it didn't appear that leaving 200' of west dike would even need to be modeled again due to lack of response in last model.

Response #8 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 3 |
| Levee Breach | 3 |
| Setback Dike | 1 |
| Training Dike | 3 |
| Full Restoration | 3 |

Least disruptive to the aquifer. Supports activities of other stakeholders. Keeps most of the salt water off of the aquifer.

Response #9 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

Here are my responses to you request for rating the various alternatives. Let me say that my preferences are heavily influenced by project cost.

Do Nothing Alternative: - support with reservations - You get most of the benefits of full restoration, with minimal costs, with the exception of the NAWCA mitigation costs. The entire area would be improved waterfowl estuarine habitat.

Levee Breach Alternative: support with reservations. Similar to the Do Nothing Alternative, except you have the cost of levee breaching, but get better control of how the new area forms.

Setback Dike Alternative: support with reservations. This alternatives does not give the full benefit for estuarine restoration, but does include wetland restoration, and no need for the NAWCA mitigation. The costs would be quite high for all the dikes.

Training Dike Alternative: Don't support/don't oppose. Too high a cost of levee removal, with only theoretical gain in estuarine habitat.

Full Dike Removal Alternative: Don't support/don't oppose. Same as alternative above.

So, I look forward to hearing what WDFW and DU decide to select as the preferred alternative. All have merit.

I hope this has been useful

Response #10 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|-----------------------------|---|
| No Restoration | 4 Not feasible for funding reasons |
| Do Nothing | 3 Funding feasible but does not benefit habitat as much or as quickly as desired. Natural tidal processes restored over time. |
| Levee Breach | 3 Feasible but not quite as much positive effect on habitat as desired. Natural tidal process restored over time |
| Setback Dike | 3 Funding and permitting seem dicey. Not as much habitat creation as desired. |
| Training Dike | 1 Highest habitat value; offers some access to wildlife watchers. Funding & permitting seems good. Best for salmon short of full restoration. |
| Full Restoration | 2 Great habitat creation; probability of funding & permitting. |

Response #11 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 2 |
| Setback Dike | 1 |
| Training Dike | 1 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

I may not have understood the directions correctly in assigning ratings to the alternative in your message below; thus I've assigned a rating of "1" to 3 alternatives. Skagit Audubon as part of its mission supports the preservation and restoration of wildlife habitat for birds and for other wildlife as well. Therefore, it's important to us to support the restoration of estuary habitat so much of which has been lost around Puget Sound. We believe it's very important to do whatever can be done to prevent the extinction of chinook and other fish. The Setback Dike alternative is attractive in that it provides something for many of the stakeholder groups: some estuary restoration, some area similar to what's at Leque now (and meeting the Snowgoose habitat management requirement of the original funding grant), etc. - - something for everyone with the exception, I understand, of the pheasant hunters. That said, we realize that finding funding for this expensive alternative would be very difficult. Thus, we support the Training Dike or Full Restoration alternatives too. The attraction of the Training Dike alternative is the possibility, if it is one, that we could walk along the top of this dike, getting a better and more extensive perspective for birding. It would also provide a near maximum of estuary restoration. We can also support the Full Restoration alternative, though it is important to us that parking be available as shown in the site plan for the alternative, and we would like to see WDFW at some point enhance wildlife watching at this site by constructing some way to get an elevated view: a tower or berm, for example. Skagit Audubon would be happy to support grant applications for this type of amenity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for all the work you've done in bringing this project along.

Response #12 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

Dear Mr. Brokaw,

The Snohomish County Marine Resources Committee (MRC) appreciates the opportunity to provide input to restoration planning work at Leque Island and specifically in the alternatives analysis ranking. As a volunteer group working on marine conservation and restoration issues in the county, we assign high importance to maximizing the habitat restoration potential at Leque Island, a historic salt marsh of the Stillaguamish River delta. As requested, we ranked each alternative using the 1 to 4 ranking system in which: 1 = Fully Support; 2 = Support with reservations; 3 = Don't support, but don't oppose; and 4 = Oppose. Our rankings and rationale are provided below.

| Design Alternative | MRC |
|--------------------|-----|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 3 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 2 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

- Full Restoration – *fully support* – This alternative was identified as having the most potential for salmon recovery and other ESA listed marine dependent species. In addition, this option provides the most restoration of natural ecological processes. We believe that restoration of natural processes is vitally important in our nearshore area for the long term sustainability of these habitats, particularly in the face of climate change. This alternative also meets Restoration Strategic actions laid out in the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area CAP, the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan, Estuary Salmon Restoration Program and the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda.
- Training Dike – *support with reservations* – While this alternative substantially improves salmon access to the site and restoring the area for other ESA listed marine dependent wildlife, the remaining portion of the levee would be a barrier to full restoration of natural processes at the site. If this alternative advances to design, we encourage WDFW to conduct the necessary research and analyses to inform the best possible location of a training levee. If the levee was located on the west side of the island, river and tidal migration could occur naturally without concern, while still providing parking and public access. If location cannot be considered, we encourage a design that minimizes the

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extent of the training levee to only that portion necessary to achieve the objective of keeping the river path from going straight into the Leque Island project site. In addition, we encourage the design team to consider whether reducing the height of the levee in part of the training levee can achieve the objective of keeping the river out while lessening the impact of the dike on natural processes.

- Setback Dike – *oppose* – This is by far the highest cost option yet provides the least habitat.
- Levee Breach – *don't support, but don't oppose* – This alternative provides partial reconnection of the tidal processes at the site. We recognize that this alternative can lead to more complete restoration of natural processes over time, but it would take too long compared to what could be achieved with a more aggressive restoration design approach. If this alternative advances to design, we encourage WDFW to consider widening the breach openings and/or adding more breach locations.
- Do Nothing – *oppose* – This alternative is unsatisfactory because it would be a large missed opportunity for this critical habitat restoration. We oppose because the time and money already invested, funds granted, and studies conducted would have amounted to no positive change in the ecosystem habitat and functionality. This alternative would bring us no closer to achieving the Restoration Strategic actions laid out in the Port Susan Marine Stewardship Area CAP, the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan, Estuary Salmon Restoration Program and the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda.
- No Restoration – *oppose* – This alternative provides no support for salmon recovery or restoration of natural physical processes in the Stillaguamish estuary. It would be a large missed opportunity and we do not support investment in reconstructed levee at the site.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this input. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss these rankings with us.

Response #13 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 1 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 4 |
| Setback Dike | 1 |
| Training Dike | 3 |
| Full Restoration | 3 |

No Restoration (1) Maintain and possibly improves the farmlands that support the majority of outdoor activities listed by our committee. Will feed ducks, swans and geese and keep them off neighboring farms. Can't afford to lose agricultural lands. No mitigation lands to be replaced.

Do Nothing & Levee Breach (4) This will waste valuable land and will not benefit people, agriculture, fish or waterfowl.

Setback Dike (1) A very good compromise for fish and waterfowl. Plus, supports most of the outdoor activities listed by our committee. No mitigation lands to be replaced. This is a win-win alternative!

Training Dike & Full Restoration (3) Only benefits fish. No real scientific data that supports improved fish numbers. Plus, construction dollars spent per fish will embarrass local and state politicians and WDFW management. Most of the outdoor activities listed by our committee will be eliminated. Potential salt water in aquifer (litigation continues). Agriculture lands taken out of production means more local crop damage by ducks, geese and swans. Need to replace land per sales agreements/contracts.

Response #14 (Respondent attended 2 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 3 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 1 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

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Response #15 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 2 |
| Levee Breach | 2 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 1 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

Response #16 (Respondent attended 2 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 4 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 2 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

Responses from Committee Members Who Didn't Use Number Scale

Response #17 (Respondent attended 2 Committee meetings)

My first choice is for Full Restoration.

Response #18 (Respondent attended 0 Committee meetings)

The logical solution to Leque Island is to repair and maintain the dikes as is and "keep it a public hunting area as it was intended to be". If funds are not available yet then time and effort should be put into place in order for that to happen. Other interests or user groups that don't pay into wildlife land "should not" be listened to. Input from hunters, even if they are the minority, should have the precedence over anyone else.

Also there are too many other risks and expense that could arise with the other alternatives. And also they only benefit certain user groups vs. all.

Leque is a perfect pheasant release site and once gone it's gone forever and may never be replaced. WDFW needs to realize the long term importance of it being restored as a permanent release site. The area and surrounding areas make it perfect. We are losing enough farmland and public hunting areas.

There is plenty of restoration salmon habitat to the South of Leque. Turning any part of a small farmland like Leque into a salt marsh will not benefit the salmon and has no proof that it will.

Response #19 (Respondent attended 0 Committee meetings)

We want to thank you for the opportunity to participate on the Leque Island stakeholder committee to provide input on the Leque Island preferred alternative. The Puget Sound Partnership is the lead agency for Puget Sound recovery charged with mobilizing the region's collective effort to restore and protect Puget Sound. Additionally, the Puget Sound Partnership is the state designated regional organization for salmon recovery in Puget Sound. Consequently, we appreciate the opportunity to comment and be a part of an open and transparent stakeholder/public process that will inform WDFW's selection of a preferred alternative for Leque Island.

After careful analysis of the six proposed alternatives and the priority actions identified in the 2014 Puget Sound Action Agenda and the NOAA approved Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan, we recommend the full restoration alternative based on the following:

- The full restoration alternative makes significant progress towards achieving the Puget Sound Partnership estuary vital sign target of restoring over 7,000 acres of estuarine habitat in Puget Sound.
- Action Agenda Strategy B2.2 states "implement prioritized nearshore and estuary restoration projects and accelerate projects on public lands".
- The full restoration alternative provides critical estuary habitat for juvenile Chinook salmon. Restoration of Leque Island is identified in the Stillaguamish Watershed Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan as an "approved" high priority project for recovering the estuary/nearshore.
- Restoring 250 acres of estuary habitat would represent a significant step for the Stillaguamish Watershed in achieving both the ten year target of restoring 2,023 acres of estuary and the fifty year target of restoring 3,668 acres as identified in their salmon recovery plan.

The restoration of Leque Island is not only a locally important project but carries significant regional importance for Puget Sound recovery and salmon recovery. Recovery efforts help support the regional economy, address treaty rights, and provide other valuable ecosystem components such as improved water quality, increased resiliency to climate change, and habitat for migratory birds and other species.

Thank you for your consideration and for your long-term commitment to Puget Sound recovery.

Sincerely,



Marc Daily
Deputy Director

**Responses From Attendees Who Did Not Initially Volunteer For
Committee (results omitted from averages)**

Response #20 (Respondent attended 1 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 4 |
| Levee Breach | 4 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 3 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

Response #21 (Respondent attended 3 Committee meetings)

| Design Alternative * | Rating |
|----------------------|--------|
| No Restoration | 4 |
| Do Nothing | 2 |
| Levee Breach | 2 |
| Setback Dike | 4 |
| Training Dike | 3 |
| Full Restoration | 1 |

The above are WFC ratings of the alternatives. The main reason behind these ratings is that restoration of estuarine functions on Leque Island is vital for Chinook recovery in the Stillaguamish watershed. This is because several thousand acres of presently diked delta habitat must be restored, and Leque Island is the easiest delta acreage to restore. If the state cannot accomplish full restoration here it is unlikely that politics will allow adequate restoration to be accomplished in the delta. The state must demonstrate here that Chinook restoration is vital, and all reasonable efforts must be accomplished by society to provide the rearing habitat needed by the Chinook populations to avoid extinction. Anything less than full restoration here would signal that the state is not serious about Chinook recovery. The two alternatives rated "4" would leave some land unrestored, permanently protected by modern dikes, which is unacceptable. The alternative rated "3" would construct a training dike which is not needed to prevent erosion, and which would to some extent prevent Chinook juveniles from finding the available rearing habitat. Money spent on this dike would be wasted, and would hurt salmon. The two alternatives rated "2" would probably result in ultimate full restoration when the existing dike erodes away, but that would take many decades, and so is undesirable. Full restoration is the only alternative that maximizes benefit to the Chinook populations; this should be chosen because WDFW should honor its commitment that recovery of threatened and endangered species is its highest priority.